

Message Text

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POUCHED ALL CANADIAN CONSULATES

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TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CA, CU, VA, MX

SUBJ: PRESS ROUND-UP: TRUDEAU VISIT TO LA

REF: OTTAWA 0403

1. SUMMARY: PRESS REPORTS ON TRUDEAU VISIT TO LATIN AMERICA AND CUBA CONCLUDE THAT CANADIAN-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS WILL GROW STRONGER. GENERAL VIEW IS THAT MEXICAN TRIP WAS THE LEAST PRODUCTIVE, CUBAN TRIP THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL AND VENEZUELAN TRIP THE MOST BUSINESS LIKE. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH PRESS ATTENTION TO CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER PIERRE TRUDEAU'S VISIT TO LATIN AMERICA HAS DIMINISHED SUBSEQUENT TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM CUBA, SOME COVERAGE HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO FOLLOWING ITEMS:

A. VENEZUELAN VISIT: TWO THEMES HAVE EMERGED, ONE THAT VENEZUELAN WERE NOT PARTICULARLY HAPPY WITH TRUDEAU'S BEHAVIOR IN CUBA AND THE OTHER THAT

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MEETINGS WITH VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS WERE PRODUCTIVE

IN INCREASING TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THAT COUNTRY SPECIFICALLY, BUT ALSO WITH LATIN AMERICA IN GENERAL. ACCORDING TO PRESS, TRUDEAU WAS "TOO CORDIAL" WITH CASTRO AND THE CARACAS JOURNAL WAS FREQUENTLY QUOTED AS CRITICIZING THE ENTHUSIASM AND "EXTREME" CORDIALITY WHICH MANIFESTED ITSELF BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS. TRUDEAU WAS APPARENTLY LECTURED ABOUT THE CYNICISM OF CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA (INTERESTINGLY, NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL WHICH ALSO CRITICIZED TRUDEAU STATEMENTS IN CUBA HAS BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN CANADA).

3. REGARDING GROWING CANADIAN-VENEZULAN TRADE, PRESS REPORTS INDICATED THAT "CANADA AND VENEZUELA HAVE AGREED THAT THEIR TWO NATIONAL PETROLEUM CORPORATIONS....WILL....DISCUSS CLOSER COLLABORATION IN THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY". ALSO RAFAEL TUDELA, DESCRIBED AS A LEADER OF THE VENEZUELAN FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, IS QUOTED AS SAYING "CANADA HAS BEGUN TO LOOK TOWARDS LATIN AMERICA". THIS VIEW, WHICH ALSO PREDICTED CLOSER BILATERAL RELATIONS, REFLECTED THE GENERAL VIEW OF BUSINESS LEADERS IN CARACAS.

B. CUBA (CONTINUED): CRITICISM OF TRUDEAU'S COMMENTS IN CUBA HAVE CONTINUED IN CANADA TO THE POINT WHERE, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, "TRUDEAU WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO ALLAY SOME OF THESE CONCERNS." IN A PRESS CONFERENCE IN CARACAS TRUDEAU ATTEMPTED TO EXPLAIN WHAT HE MEANT BY HIS COMMENTS BUT HE ALSO STUCK BY HIS GUNS, SAYING HE WOULD NOT CHANGE HIS MIND ABOUT VISITING CUBA IF HE HAD TO DO THE TOUR OVER AGAIN. "PRIME MINISTER BRUTALLY FRANK WITH CASTRO" SAID ONE NEWS REPORT WHICH TRIED TO SHOW THAT TRUDEAU IN FACT ARGUED STRENUOUSLY WITH CASTRO REGARDING CUBAN ROLE WITH ANGOLA.

C. MARGARET TRUDEAU: "ONE FAUX PAS AFTER ANOTHER - PM'S AIDES DISTURBED BY MARGARET'S GAFFES". THIS HEADLINE SUMMARIZED THE IMPRESSION WHICH HAS BEEN CREATED IN CANADA REGARDING MARGARET TRUDEAU'S BEHAVIOR IN LATIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AMERICA. APPARENTLY MANY OBSERVERS WERE DISTURBED BY HER EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECHES IN MEXICO AND CARACAS, HER SINGING OF A SONG FOR THE WIFE OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, HER GIVING A MOCK SALUTE WHEN "O CANADA" WAS PLAYED, HER WEARING A LIBERAL PARTY T-SHIRT IN CUBA AND BY OTHER MINOR OCCURRENCES.

D. GENERAL: GENERAL REACTIONS ABOUT THE ENTIRE TRIP ARE BEGINNING TO BE REPORTED. IT WOULD APPEAR AS IF THE PRESS CONSIDERED THE MEXICAN PART OF THE TRIP THE LEAST INTERESTING, WHERE VERY LITTLE WAS ACCOMPLISHED, WHERE TRUDEAU FOUND HIMSELF DEFENDING THE US AGAINST AN ABRASIVE PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND WHERE MRS. TRUDEAU'S EXTEMPERANEOUS SPEECH WAS THE MOST NEWSWORTHY OCCURRENCE. THE CUBAN VISIT WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO BE CRITICIZED FOR ITS TIMING AND FOR THE POSSIBLY EXCESSIVE WARMTH SHOWN BY TRUDEAU FOR HIS CUBAN HOSTS (WHILE HIS APOLOGISTS WILL CONTINUE TO POINT OUT THAT HE ONLY SAID THAT WHICH WAS APPROPRIATE FOR THE OCCASION AND THAT IN PRIVATE TALKS HE WAS FORCEFUL IN EXPRESSING CANADIAN VIEWS RE FOREIGN INTERVENTION). THE VENEZUELAN PORTION EMERGES AS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS VENTURE.

4. TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL INFLUENTIAL COLUMIST GEOFFREY STEVENS HAS ALREADY WRITTEN ONE COLUMN ENTITLED THE "LATIN CONNECTION" WHICH CONCLUDES "YET SURELY IT WAS USEFUL FOR A CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER TO TALK AT LENGTH AND IN DEPTH TO THREE IMPORTANT THIRD WORLD LEADERS FROM A PART OF THE GLOBE THAT NO PRIME MINISTER HAD EVER TOURED BEFORE....THESE THINGS....ADD UP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF ISSUES OF CONCERN NOT ONLY TO CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA, BUT TO THE ENTIRE WORLD." ALTHOUGH ACCORDING TO STEVENS "CANADA IS NOT GOING TO JOIN THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES" HE DOES REPORT THAT "CANADA IS MORE INTERESTED IN....THE LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM (KNOWN AS SELA)" AND CONJECTURES THAT CANADA MIGHT BECOME AN OBSERVER AT THAT ORGANIZATION.

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